

Teacher in Role: Transitioning in and out of Character

Excerpted from “Artful Engineering” workshop
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Farmer Franny

Teacher in role is an easy technique that allows the teacher to incorporate dramatic play and to lead the class from inside the dramatic play. In this example, the teacher introduces a story or experience with a puppet before then taking on the puppet’s character through teacher in role.

Ask the children if they remember Farmer Franny. *What did she say we were going to do today?* (Help her harvest the apples, ride in the wagon.)

Instead of using a puppet, the teacher can become Farmer Franny (in-role) with help of simple props such as a hat with braids and a bandana.

Do you remember what Farmer Franny was wearing? A HAT like this one! What about her hair? Yes, she had BRAIDS like these. Do you remember what she wore? Yes, this type of scarf is also called a bandana. Right now, I’m Ms. Jeanne. I am going to turn around, and I want you to count to 10 for me. When I turn back around, I will be Farmer Franny.

Have the children help the transition to the role by counting to 10.

After the experience, the teacher comes out of role as Franny by turning around and having the children count to 10.

The most important thing about changing character is changing voice. Whether speaking higher or lower, this simple change can give you a completely different character.

One of the wonderful things about going into role with the children is the use of simple props that become symbols for the character. This connects to decoding in early literacy—connecting sign and meaning—because whenever the children see the prop, they think of the character. In this instance, when they see the braids or hat, they connect those symbols to Franny. Going in and out of role also helps children develop their imaginations and shows them how easy it is to pretend.